



ASBP - THE LAST SIXTY YEARS

G. Michael Steelman, MD, FASBP - Medical Editor

Editor's Note: Thank you for celebrating sixty years with ASBP. The contents of this commemorative issue are a compilation of articles written by ASBP members throughout the decades. I greatly appreciate the assistance from ASBP staff for researching and writing this article. Much of the information about the earlier society was originally published in articles by W.L. Asher, MD, FASBP and Denise Bruner, MD, FASBP.

In 1950 the first meeting of the National Glandular Society was held in Denver, Colorado. Organized by Western Research Laboratories, the group of fifteen primarily osteopathic physicians drafted its constitution and by-laws and incorporated the society in Colorado. E. E. Allaby was elected President, and seven physicians established membership and meeting policies. Drug companies used the society's regular meetings primarily as social events where they could promote and sell their products (primarily thyroid and digitalis). The meetings continued on a semi-annual basis. The fall meetings were the prototype of ASBP's annual symposia where practical case studies and patient management problems were discussed.

Raymond Dietz, DO, FASBP and Harvey Smith, DO joined the society in the mid 1950s. Dr. Dietz coined the word "bariatric," which is derived from the Greek word "bár(os)," meaning "heavy." The first official logo was designed in 1954. The society's name was changed to the American Society of Bariatric Physicians in 1961.



Recognizing the importance of improving standards of practice, Dr. Dietz established a committee named the American Board of Bariatric Medicine (ABBM) in 1970, and served as its Chairman for 20 years. The ABBM's role as the credentialing body was to administer written and oral examinations

to qualified candidates. The annual meeting of 1964 marked the first occasion that a physician from outside the membership was recruited to instruct at a conference. Richard Bloomfield, MD, a cardiologist from Harvard University, taught a course on electrocardiography.

Life magazine published an entire edition titled "The Dangerous Diet Pills" in January 1968, which exposed the fact that the amphetamine/digitalis/sedative combo was the mainstay of obesity treatment. Since several of these major drug manufacturers were integrally involved with the society, this publication created public relations problems. W.L. Asher, MD, FASBP became ASBP's first Executive Director in 1970, and under his direction the society divorced itself from the pharmaceutical companies. Dr. Asher ran the entire society from the basement of his Colorado home until financial solvency

could be attained. At this time, membership dues were \$500. In the spring of 1970, ASBP published its first monthly newsletter and was listed in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* Directory of Medical Societies. At the fall meeting of 1970, the first *Bariatrician of the Year* award was presented to Dr. Dietz.

The 1971 fall convention included the introduction of the first program designed for office assistants. That same year the first journal titled *Obesity and Bariatric Medicine* was published and distributed to over 10,000 physicians. The journal became indexed in *Current Contents/Clinical Practice* in 1974, which is when an editorial advisory board was appointed. The journal evolved into what is today the *American Journal of Bariatric Medicine, The Bariatrician*. That same year the society began offering a malpractice insurance program for bariatric physicians.

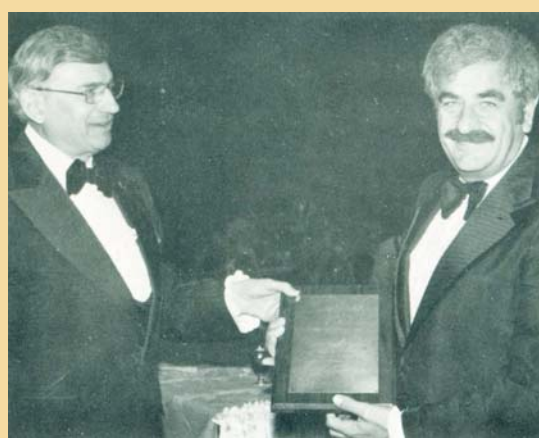
In his role as President, Leonard Haimes, MD, FASBP instituted the principles of "Credence, Credibility, and Communication" as part of a master plan to move the society forward. In 1975, ASBP was accredited by the American Medical Association (AMA) to award Category I CME credits, and subsequently the American Osteopathic Association allowed ASBP to award Category II-D CME credits. By 1975 ASBP membership had grown to 510, a marked increase from the membership body of 33 when Dr. Asher assumed leadership in 1970.

Beginning in 1977, ASBP President Peter Lindner, MD, FASBP and Dr. Asher continued to work with the scientific community to make ASBP a credible organization comprised of reputable and responsible clinicians. As a result, the ASBP received national attention as physician experts were asked to present Congressional testimony on behalf of the saccharin controversy. Dr. Lindner filled the role of Director of Continuing Medical Education until the time

of his death in 1987. He was a gifted teacher and mandated that office inspections become a prerequisite for obtaining ABBM Diplomate status. In 1990, *Honorary Fellow* awards were given to Daisy Lindner Stoutsenberger, RN, CRT, PA-C; George Blackburn, MD, PhD and George Bray, MD for their efforts to promote the recognition and treatment of obesity as a disease by competent physicians.

ASBP experienced a number of challenges and accomplishments during the subsequent years. In 1989, the nation watched Oprah Winfrey lose a tremendous amount of weight utilizing a protein sparing modified fast (PSMF), only to observe her relapse and regain her weight.

As a result, the PSMF fell into disrepute overnight. The 1997 Fen/Phen Fiasco could have been disastrous for ASBP. Jim Merker filled the role of Executive Director from 1982 to 2000, and was successful at organizing a task force to develop, implement and revise ASBP's strategic plan to ensure its survival



Raymond Dietz, DO, FASBP and Leonard Haimes, MD, FASBP (1976).

and growth.

Despite increasing governmental and statewide constraints, Congress again requested ASBP's assistance in 1990. Denise Bruner, MD, FASBP; Ricardo Crudo, MD, FACIP, PC and Peter Vash, MD, MPH, FASBP testified before the Congressional Subcommittee about the dangers of over the counter appetite suppressants in the adolescent population. Dr. Bruner also appeared on NBC's *Today Show*. Chaired by Dr. Asher, the Anorectic Task Force developed ASBP's first anorectic guidelines in 1990. These benchmark guidelines were utilized by ASBP members and staff to provide necessary documentation to various state boards and other regulatory agencies in the development of reasonable practice guidelines. The guidelines were revised in 1996 and 2000 under the direction of Larry Richardson, MD, FASBP. They were again revised in 2004 under the direction of G. Michael Steelman, MD, FASBP.

As part of ASBP's ongoing efforts to gain acceptance in the established medical community, the ASBP was admitted to the AMA Specialty and Service Society in 1996. As a result of the relentless perseverance of Vernon Astler, MD, MS, FACS, the ASBP was admitted to the AMA House of Delegates in June 2001. ASBP produced three educational television segments featuring three ASBP Presidents, Drs. Denise Bruner, Larry Richardson and Michael Steelman, which aired on *Lifeline, Today's Health and Public Broadcasting System*. Tapes of these shows were made available to ASBP members for use in their bariatric practices. The ABBM, ASBP's sister organization, became its own entity in February 1997.

The millennium ushered in many opportunities for ASBP to forge relationships with numerous organizations. Dr. Denise Bruner participated in the "Great Nutrition Debate" that was sponsored by the United States Department of Agriculture. ASBP was part of a coalition that successfully petitioned the Internal Revenue Service to change the rules governing the deductibility of the costs of bariatric care. ASBP's AMA Delegates, Gary Zisk, DO, FASBP and John Kelly, MD, were instrumental in crafting a resolution that opposed online pharmacies selling controlled medications, including appetite suppressants, without proper physician supervision. They ensured that the resolution was adopted by the AMA in 2003. More recently, James Bland, MD, JD; Erin Chamberlin-Snyder, MD, FAAFP and Mary Vernon, MD, FAAFP, FASBP, CMD have helped represent ASBP at the AMA's annual and interim meetings. Current and past Board Members have been instrumental in cultivating relationships with academia, industry and other organizations such as the American Dietetic Association, American Society for Metabolic and Bariatric Surgery, Nutrition and Metabolism Society, STOP Obesity Alliance and The Obesity Society.

In the spring of 2006, the ASBP Board of Trustees appointed Dr. Michael Steelman to fill a newly created position as Medical Editor of *The Bariatrician*. ASBP conducted a Prescribing Practices Survey in 2008. The intent of the anonymous member survey was to collect data on what types and how frequently obesity drugs are used in bariatric practice.

In 2008 the one-day workshop *Basic Medical Weight Loss Tech-*

niques was implemented in various cities across the United States. The course was designed for physicians new to the field of bariatrics to provide current information and tools for treating overweight and obese patients. Associate Members were awarded voting rights in ASBP in 2009.

Two important items were published in 2010. Under the direction of Allen Rader, MD, the *Overweight and Obesity Evaluation and Management Guidelines* were established, replacing the Anorectic Usage Guidelines. This name change reflects the ASBP's comprehensive approach to clinical obesity treatment. The ASBP book titled *Obesity – Evaluation and Treatment Essentials* was published in July 2010. The following members were involved in the book's production: Editors: Drs. Michael Steelman and Eric Westman (each also contributing to the chapters); Contributors: Drs. Harold Seim, Larry Richardson, J. Tom Cooper, Mary Vernon, James Wortman, Deborah Bade Horn, Erin Chamberlin-Snyder, Ed Hendricks, Scott Rigden, John Cleek, Howard Eisenson, Frank Greenway, Steven Smith, James Bland and Jeffrey Lawrence. Dr. Bill Asher wrote the foreword for the book.

ASBP's new Fellowship Program is scheduled to begin in November 2010 and will be a key step towards the goal of obtaining recognition by the American Board of Medical Specialties. The program is intended for any physician interested in increasing his or her level of knowledge in bariatric medicine.

Throughout the past sixty years, ASBP has continued to emphasize the importance of multi-modal therapeutic approaches to bariatric treatment in conjunction with adhering to its established standards of practice. Under the guidance of Harold Seim, MD, MPH, FASBP, who has assumed the role of CME Director since 1990, ASBP's educational programs continue to provide the most recent educational updates in the field of bariatric medicine. ■



ASBP physicians who testified before Congress in 1990: Denise Bruner, MD, FASBP; Peter Vash, MD, MPH, FASBP and Ricardo Crudo, MD, FACIP, PC.



Patt Panzer, MD and Harold Seim, MD, MPH, FASBP (1991).